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ABSTRACT

A distortion has grown up between urban and rural economies creating a condition where neither is able to sustain itself, thus restricting individual opportunities. At one time, 98 percent of the U.S. depended on the rural economy. Interrelated developments such as the input of ideas, enterprise, mechanical innovations, the opening of new and fertile lands, and the formation of new settlements contributed to early rural America's vitality and strength. While the countryside provided the material and human resources, urban centers were converting raw materials into a product. New markets began opening up for products and services in the urban areas. An interdependence and balance existed between urban and rural economies, but now the rural economic framework is no longer a viable structure and has not been for many years. Today, many communities are dying in the rural areas. If rural America is to develop in concert with the rest of the nation, a new kind of economic and social framework needs to be created, including enterprises which can raise the economic level and make it more compatible with the times and conditions of the rest of the nation. (NQ)

From COUNTRYSIDE STUDIES by G. B. Gunlogson

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# A PATTERN
# FOR BETTER LIVING

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# A PATTERN FOR BETTER LIVING

The American people have been the most creative in the world, but collectively we have not done a good job of managing this creativeness and our vast natural resources. Countless communities and vast areas of the country have become human wastelands. Meanwhile, the big cities have become blighted and rife with human decadence. The relief rolls grow larger, and discontent more widespread. People are looking for a change. The purpose of this study is to suggest that we can provide a pattern for better living in America.

The "rural" economic framework on which 98 percent of the United States depended is no longer a viable structure, and it has not been for many years. If this vast body of America is to develop in concert with the rest of the nation, there will have to be created a new kind of economic and social framework. This would include enterprises that can raise its economic level and make it more compatible with the times and conditions in the rest of the nation.

The distortion that has grown up between the "urban" and "rural" economies has created a condition where neither is able to sustain itself, and it is restricting individual opportunities.

When most of the United States was a wilderness, the country and its population became divided into "urban" and "rural" categories. The Census Bureau classified the population residing in places of more than 2,500 as urban. All the rest of the country and its population were defined rural. This concept of the United States and its population has been adhered to ever since in government operations and by many people, notwithstanding the tremendous changes that have taken place in the character of the country and its population.

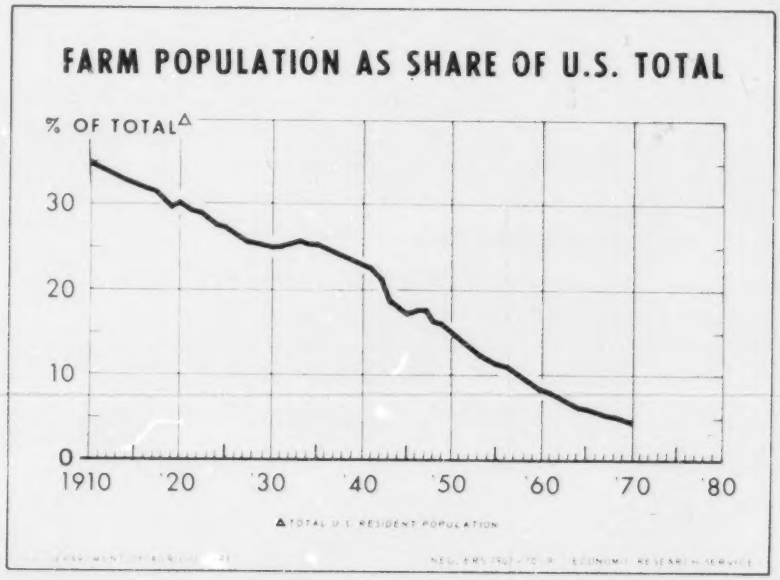
In the 18th and 19th centuries immigrants from every part of the earth were arriving by the millions. These adventurous people came from no less than 40 different countries to seek opportunities and a better life than their native countries had to offer.

They brought with them a greater variety of backgrounds, skills, and cultures than had ever been assembled anywhere else on earth. This blending of qualities served as a catalyst to let loose a tremendous surge of inventive effort and initiative. Actually, they were creating a new future in a new world.

Many interrelated developments were taking place which contributed to the vitality and strength of early "rural" America. The input of ideas, enterprise, mechanical innovations, the opening of new and fertile lands, and formation of new settlements excelled anything that had ever been experienced before anywhere else on earth. There were thousands of schools, churches, and whole communities to be built and countless miles of roads to be improved.

By the 1880's "rural" USA was bursting into full bloom. It was a period when family and home, community, neighbors, the land, and individual enterprise formed the essence of living. This satisfying and self-sufficient life style was enjoyed for a long time by a large share of the country's population. The market for the products of the land seemed insatiable at home and abroad.

By 1880 the population of the United States had reached 50,155,783. Of this, 35,383,345 or 70 percent was still "rural" and about 20 million lived on farms. Against this, the "urban" population living in towns or cities over 2,500 was only 24,722,438. Today the farm population is less than 4 percent of the nation's total. The chart below shows this trend since 1910.




**U.S. total and farm population**

| Year | Total resident population | Farm population[1] | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number | Share of total population |
| | *Thousands* | *Thousands* | *Percent* |
| 1910 | 92,228 | 32,077 | 34.8 |
| 1920 | 106,022 | 31,974 | 30.2 |
| 1930 | 123,203 | 30,529 | 24.8 |
| 1940 | 132,165 | 30,547 | 23.1 |
| 1950 | 151,326 | 23,048 | 15.2 |
| 1960 | 179,323 | 15,635 | 8.7 |
| 1961 | 182,350 | 14,803 | 8.1 |
| 1962 | 185,208 | 14,313 | 7.7 |
| 1963 | 187,998 | 13,367 | 7.1 |
| 1964 | 190,724 | 12,954 | 6.8 |
| 1965 | 193,258 | 12,363 | 6.4 |
| 1966 | 195,377 | 11,595 | 5.9 |
| 1967 | 197,367 | 10,875 | 5.5 |
| 1968 | 199,374 | 10,454 | 5.2 |
| 1969 | 201,422 | 10,307 | 5.1 |
| 1970 | 203,675 | [2]9,700 | 4.8 |

[1] Includes Alaska and Hawaii in 1960-70 only.
[2] Preliminary.

U.S. Bureau of the Census and ERS.

As early as 1880 the number of farms had reached 4,008,907 and the improved acreage 284,771,000. The number grew to 6,814,000 in 1935, and from this peak it has steadily declined to 2,600,000 in 1972.

The export of farm products had reached $694,315,497 by 1880 and accounted for 84 percent of all domestic exports. American agriculture had then become the most efficient in the world. A number of farm papers had become influential sources of information. They helped farmers learn from one another and to advance better practices. The U.S. Department of Agriculture had been established, and its total employment had reached a hundred people.

This was an era of opportunities, material growth, improving living conditions, and the development of values that became indelibly stamped on the American character. It was the beginning of a flow of new tools and machines and products that were to change the entire country.

## INVENTIVENESS BECAME THE FORCE OF THE FUTURE

The forces that have charted social and economic trends in America have been inventiveness and industry. They have influenced our individual lives and shaped the structure of our communities. It was natural that any of the early inventions should be designed to lighten the work and increase the efficiency of those who had to work the land and produce the necessities of life such as food, fiber, fuel, lumber and minerals.

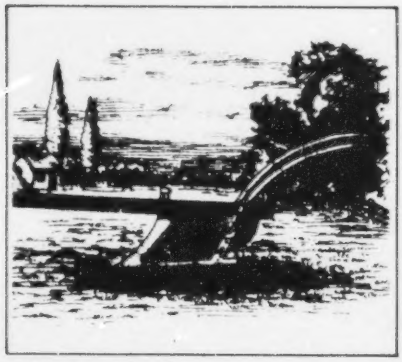
Then came the necessity for better transportation, communications, household articles, and so forth. This was followed by countless devises and products to make life easier and more pleasant. It is of interest to note that most of the basic inventions having to do with farming were made by the farmers themselves. Some of these early machines are shown on the opposite page.

By 1880 the manufacture of farm machines had grown to a substantial industry with a production value of $68,640,486. The number of patents on plows alone had reached 6,686; on seeders, 1,440. It is also interesting to note that a patent was granted as early as 1884 on a steam plow and in 1887 on a harvester-threasher, a prototype of the modern combine.

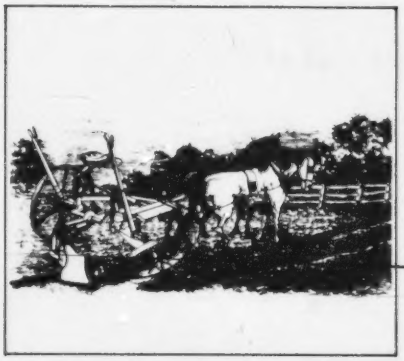
In a report of the United States Bureau of Labor published early in this century, it is stated:

> "The reason why agricultural labor could decline relative to national comsumption and still leave an enormous national surplus for export is the excessive use of agricultural machines. From 1865 to 1894 the time of human labor required to produce one bushel of corn on an average declined from 4 hours and 34 minutes to 41 minutes. In the matter of wheat production, 1894 being compared with 1830, the required human labor declined from 3 hours and 3 minutes to 10 minutes."

This level of production efficiency in agriculture remained fairly constant until the advent of the tractor and power farming. Then science and technology introduced the chemical era, which again greatly cut the man-hours in farm production. Today farmers in the United States produce nearly three times as much per man-hour of work as in 1950 and nearly seven times as much as in 1930.

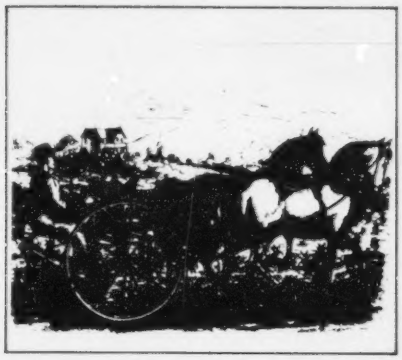


1. Plow, cast iron - patent 1797

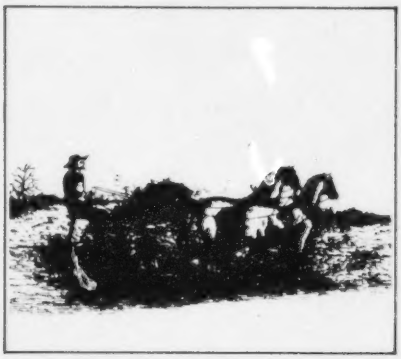


2. Riding plow - patent 1884

3. Disk harrow - patent 1897

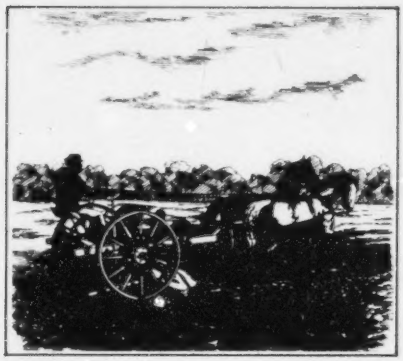


4. Riding cultivator - patent 1884

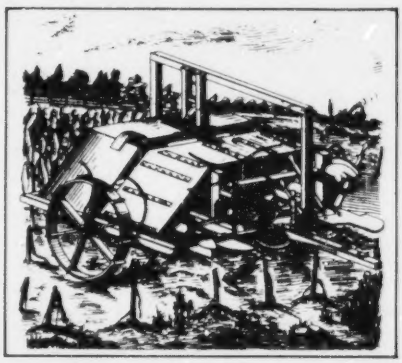


5. Check row planter - patent 1883

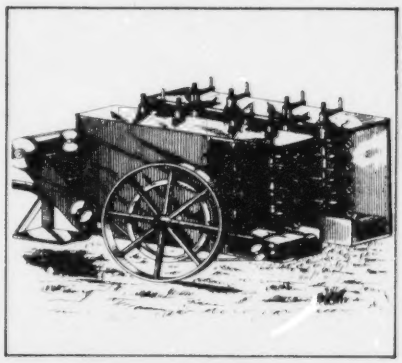
6. Grain seeder - patent 1884



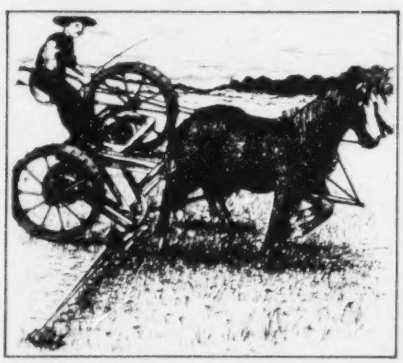
7. Potato digger - patent 1882



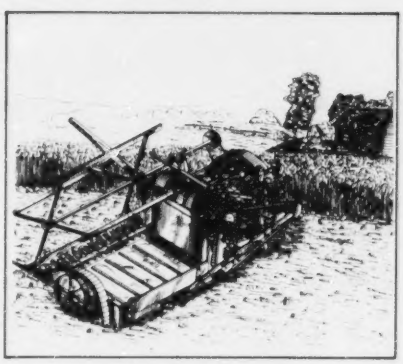
8. Corn harvester - patent 1875



9. Cotton picker - patent 1872



10. Mower - patent 1884



11. Grain binder - patent 1870

12. Grain combine - patent 1883

In 1880 there were 1,943 manufacturers of agricultural implements. Total employment was 39,480; and the value of production $60,640,486. This included 1,326,123 plows, 318,057 cultivators, 79,074 grain seeders, and a great variety of other machines.

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During these years millions of man-hours of work were moving away from the country and into the cities. Furthermore, science and technology have worked as a double-edged blade in agriculture. The per capita comsumption of butter and other animal fats has been reduced to about one-half of what it was 20 years ago. Since 1954 the reduction in use of cotton has been from 25 pounds to 18 per capita; in wool, from 2.4 pounds to 1.2. Against this, the increase in synthetic fibers has increased from 2.1 pounds to 20 during this same period. The technological changes in agriculture have been changing every aspect of life in America.

During the ninteenth century the basis for an industrial revolution was being formed which was to change completely the economy and social structure of the United States and bring important changes to the whole world. The factory system and interchangeability of parts in manufacture, which had been slowly developing, were now gaining rapid momentum.

The chart on page 8 shows the scope of industrial production at the turn of the century. In 1909 the total value of manufactured products had reached nearly 2 billion dollars.

The growth in industrial production and the multiplicity of products and related services since then are so overwhelming that any comparison would have little meaning. For example, the sales of General Motors alone are currently about 12 times the total value of all products manufactured 70 years ago. The net profit may reach 2 billion dollars for 1972. The net profit of International Business Machines Corporation in 1971 was more than the gross farm income in North Dakota that same year.

## THE DECLINE OF "RURAL" COMMUNITIES

These figures emphasize the difference between two kinds of economies--innovative or expanding economy and the other which is limited to production of primary commodities. In the one, you can take a dollar's worth of raw materials and convert it into an article that may be worth a hundred dollars. By creative ideas, new markets are opened up for products and services.

An interesting sidelight on the dynamics of this innovative economy is contained in a report prepared in 1908 by an economist warning the financial community about the future of the "horseless carriage" or motor car business.

> "The motor car is essentially a luxury which no doubt we will continue to enjoy perhaps in increasing numbers. It is predicted that there will be 100,000 sold next year. However, this cannot be expected to expand much beyond this limit when we consider that the total first-cost investment by the new purchasers will be reaching $200 million annually."

Now automobile production is about 100 times this. If this economist were to return to the present scene, he might wonder how his economics went wrong.

One measure of our industrial progress is provided by the gross national product, which in 1940 stood at about 100 billion dollars and now exceeds $1,100 billion. Total horsepower increased from 2,773 million in 1940 to 20,419 million in 1970; electric energy from 180 billion kilowatt hours to 1,638.

This dynamic growth became centered largely in the urban areas, while the countryside has been providing the material and human resources.

Agricultural products now come to less than 3 percent of the national income. Unless more industrial growth is shifted into towns and small cities scattered across the country, 98 percent of the United States will become a land of empty homes and diminishing resources.

This imbalance has now brought us face to face with two historic emergencies. In the country too many communities are dying; and in the big cities human degeneration, inefficiency, poverty, pollution, and unsafe streets have reached a crisis.

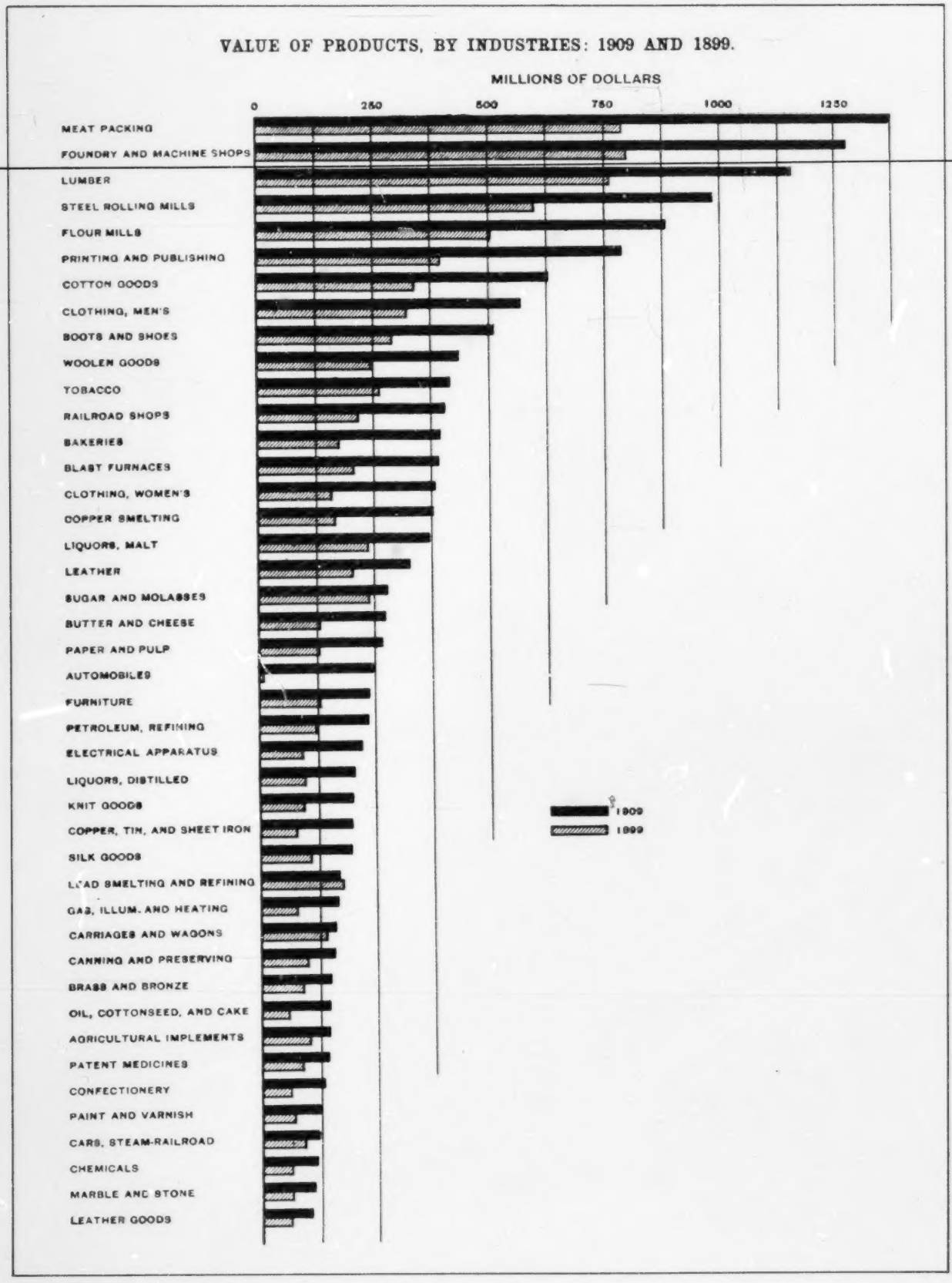
One view of this crisis in the cities was summed up recently by the Honorable Moon Landrieu, mayor of New Orleans, on July 25, 1972, before the Senate Finance Committee:

> "Well-meaning policies of the Federal Government have contributed to the situation now facing us:
> 1) The national farm policy disinherited millions of farm families, driving masses of them into already crowded cities.
> 2) The Federal Housing Administration's policies contributed to urban sprawl by subsidizing 10 times as many units of housing in the suburbs as in the inner city.
> 3) The national highway program further stimulated the suburban exodus, bisecting cities with concrete, subsidizing congestion and pollution, and ignoring the need for urban mass transit.
> 4) Inflation, the result of federal fiscal and monetary policies, has been the greatest cause of increased city expenditures. Between 1955 and 1970, prices paid for goods and services by state and local government units rose at an average rate of 4.2 percent, compared with 2.7 percent for the economy as a whole... In my city of New Orleans the story is all too typical. Starting in 1966, we have had to increase the local sales tax twice; we have imposed a garbage-collection charge; we have increased taxes on gas, electricity, and water; we bit the bullet and raised sewerage charges 80 percent two years ago, raised them 20 percent in the past year, and now must raise them again in order to meet Environmental Protection Agency requirements for secondary treatment facilities across the board; we have increased public transit fares by 50 percent."

Whatever the government has been doing, it has had little success solving the problems of either the big cities or the countryside. These problems will not be solved until industry and other enterprises become more widely dispersed across the country. This would improve conditions in the city and at the same time open up new frontiers of opportunity and development in the rest of the country.

The large cities in the United States have gone through successive metamorphic changes. Some of these have been stages of social and economic contradictions. The cities are the headquarters for most of the country's largest corporations and money institutions. They boast of towering skyscrapers. They are the symbols of the country's wealth; and yet they harbor more abject poverty, filth, crime, and human despair than found anywhere else in the country.

In their early stages the cities grew from the earnings of industry and trade that became centered there. Now most of the advantages which they once had to offer are no longer monopolies. Power, transportation, communications, and other services are now widely dispersed across the country and in some places are more readily available and less costly than in big cities.




This chart shows the scope of industrial production at the turn of the century. In 1909 the total value of manufactured products had reached nearly 2 billion dollars.

Technological changes often demand new conditions. Manufacturing and many enterprises require much larger ground areas than formerly as well as extensive parking space and greater accessability to streets and highways.

Most cities have now become surrounded by assorted clusters of manufacturing complexes, shopping centers, housing developments, motels, service stations, hamburger places, entertainment centers, material yards, and every kind of activity of industrial man. Somewhere a line has to be drawn between the center city and these sprawling aggregates; otherwise, oppression and inefficiency could become intolerable burdens.

At one time the term "Standard Metropolitan System" was coined with the idea of extending the geographic base of urban influence and interests. This abstraction has been widely used as a statistical pattern for social and economic planning. Whatever validity this paper structure may have had now seems to be disappearing, and the statistics increasingly meaningless.

There are those who predict an endless growth upward and outward of megalopolitan conglomerates. This would be a gloomy prospect for all Americans. Highly concentrated environments may adversely affect human behavior, and we know they have been drawing too heavily on the basic resources of the country.

The city of Chicago boasts of mammoth buildings that have as many people working in them as the total population in some counties in Illinois--counties that contain nearly 1,000 square miles of the earth's surface and communities that go back to Abraham Lincoln's time. Surely, this cannot be the ultimate destiny for the state of Illinois and its typically American race of people.

The greatness and quality of a city are mutally interrelated with the greatness and quality of the rest of the country. These factors of interdependence and balance must be taken into consideration in planning the future of American cities.

## NEW ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR COUNTRYSIDE

The American countryside must formualte an economic framework adapted to its own unique situation and to the changing conditions in the country. For too long the countryside has suffered a continuous deficit from exporting jobs and people to big cities. This has denied people opportunities to enjoy the fullest freedom to live where they choose.

Our common goal must be to make better use of our total natural resources in terms of better living for a greater share of the population. These basic resources are in the country and not in the big cities.

Past programs by the government to bolster the "rural" economy have met with little success. These efforts have been like patching up an old structure whose foundation has crumbled. The old structure is neither sound nor functionally suited to meet the expectations and the needs of growing America. You can't develop 98 percent of the United States under the term "rural". This connotation is no longer acceptable by most country people, and it is not consistent with the concept of development.

This new structure of framework must have a base broad enough to accommodate more industry and also to provide the amenities that attract people. Diversification and expanding manufacturing are needed to provide opportunities and open up the countryside to more people.

This kind of framework will provide a more favorable environment for people and encourage better use of all natural resources. It would include towns and small cities up to 15,000 population or even larger if they are functionally a part of the country framework. At the same time towns of under 2,500 are not downgraded or characterized as "rural". They are the essential gateways to most of the country, and many of them are destined to become future growth centers. This countryside pattern would be inviting to many industries and new services. It could open new opportunities for farm families and new income for many farmers.

This development is not wholly untried. It has been successful in a number of places. Some heartland states have reported as many as 100 country towns that gained new industries in 1971. In addition, various other kinds of businesses have been opening up to bring in new income and new people.

There is yet another kind of immigrant that is being welcomed in country towns. They are people who are escaping conditions in big cities which to them have become frightening and intolerable. Some of them come to fulfill a dream of living in the country and are eager to enter the milieu of this new world.

In many cases this has led to buying abandoned farmhouses and a few acres of land. This, too, may be the foreboding of a prophesy made by Ambassador Karl Rolvaag, former governor of Minnesota, when he wrote: "Sooner or later, the rush from the country to the cities and now from the cities to the suburbs will return to an exodus back to the countryside."

Actually, there are more than 6,000 country towns and small cities that are almost ideally situated to accommodate a variety of new industries and more people. They have power, transportation, water and basic improvements.

The inventory of land resources and living space in the countryside has attained a new scale of value; and year by year these values are becoming more indispensable to the future growth of the country. The fertile fields, forests, river systems, mountains, natural beauty, and more than 3 million square miles of land area are in the countryside and not in the cities.

All of us have an intangible stake in every acre of land, whether or not we hold a deed to any of it. These are times when the course of the whole country could change completely by default. Land ownership between government, big corporations, and individuals may be reaching a precarious balance. The land is a power base. Acquisitions of vast land holdings by big corporations and the growing participation in agriculture by large multi-business corporations call for judgments that must transcend near-term expediencies.

These developments should concern everyone who cherishes his heritage. But the hardest impact falls on the 70 million people who live in the countryside and make their living on farms and in thousands of country towns.

Once a notion was widely held that bigness per se meant efficiency, economy, and wisdom; but this has long since been dispelled by what we have seen of big governments as well as some large corporations. The hovering shadow of our own federal government across the whole country is beginning to frighten many people.

This could not be America without the giant corporations that do business in all parts of the world. Neither would it be America without the entrepreneur and the millions of small enterprises that are continuously

creating new jobs and providing the seed for larger industries. Nearly all our big corporations grew from this kind of seed.

Actually, there are more small businesses and individual enterprises in the country and small cities than in all the big cities. There are 890,176 small corporations that filed income tax returns in 1968 that had assets of less than $100,000. Another 552,935 had assets under one million. Nearly one-half of these were in small cities. Of the 10,130,000 proprietorships and partnerships, more than half are in the countryside and in small cities. A healthy climate for small business is a priceless resource.

WHAT GOES ON OUT THERE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

There may be fewer people than ever who really know the countryside and understand that it is much more than a producer of food for our tables.

The mass communication media are oriented largely toward the society and the affairs of big cities and seldom refer to the quieter happenings in the country. A recent column-by-column study of 10 metropolitan newspapers revealed that about 2 percent of the space contained items identified with the countryside or any of its 16,000 towns and small cities. Television concentrates on the spectacular events in the world and provides only an occasional glimpse of our own countryside.

There is no voice that speaks for the countryside or represents its total interests. The result is that this vast body of America has been overlooked and is little understood by the masses. And yet it would seem that one of the goals of education should be to make known and better understood how the COUNTRYSIDE USA, its resources and people, are interrelated with the life of everybody regardless of where he may live.

City people want to know more about country towns. This was evidenced in a sampling of opinions among people in New York and Philadelphia a few years ago. The interest expressed was confined mainly to three areas: What are the small towns like in say Indiana, Iowa, of Kansas? What sort of people live there, and what do they do? Some seemed skeptical about educational and cultural opportunities. Obviously, the interest varied somewhat by the respondent's own background.

Studies made in hundreds of country towns and in many states show that people vary as they do in the big cities. But there is an inherent difference in their temperament because of different environmental and social conditions.

They are independent, but are likely to be more stable and more deeply rooted in their communities. Individuals may differ on issues and community affairs, but there is a bond that makes for greater awareness of their responsibilities to each other and their environment. They are more often tied together through relatives and friends of many generations. Most of them are decendents of early settlers. There is more neighborliness in their workaday activities, their institutions, weddings, church services and public gatherings. A higher percentage participate in civic affairs. They are friendlier and more hospitable to strangers.

There is also much difference in country towns, not only in their natural setting and attractiveness, but in the general attitude and enterprise of their people. Some towns are drab and lifeless, and others

are bustling with exurberance. In proportion to population, small cities have more social, civic, business, cultural, and recreational organizations than big cities. There are far more across the board opportunities for outdoor recreation such as fishing, hunting, golf, horseback riding, nature trails, and many more. In many country locations these activities are rapidly growing.

As for educational facilities, these may be worse or better than found in big cities. Improvements may be progressing faster than in the cities. In Iowa the number of youngsters per thousand population attending high school and entering college is far higher than in the city of New York. The desperate problems in education are in the large cities and not in the small cities.

Nor should we underestimate the value of the human resource that comes from the countryside. While the total population of the countryside is only one-third of the nation's total, about half of all our large corporations are headed by men who came from the country or small cities. A higher percentage of doctors, lawyers, and engineers come from the countryside. And five of our last seven Presidents came from country towns.

## THERE IS A NEW DREAM IN AMERICA

There are many favorable signs ahead. A number of utilities are beginning to promote countryside locations for business and industry. There are leaders in Congress who are making the countryside a priority issue. Extensive government programs and funds are being directed toward development of country communities.

Most important of all, people are beginning to see the countryside as the key to better living. A Gallup poll showed 6 out of 10 people would choose country towns to live in if they had a choice. A significant study was recently conducted among young people, college and non-college, by Unidex Corporation from which these paragraphs are quoted:

> "The magnetic aura of the large city and the expanse of suburbia so prevalent in the 50's and 60's may well be giving way to a new set of attitudes--attitudes borne by the millions of Americans who are now, or soon will be, forming a household and entering the job market. Even among college students, well less than four out of every ten wished to live in a large city or suburb."

In answer to the question: In which of the following types of places would you most like to live? The overall answers were:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Small city or town | 38.1% | Large city | 13.5% |
| Rural area | 27.9% | Suburb | 19.7% |

All these portents seem to be saying that the time has never been more opportune for both the countryside and the big cities to put their houses in order. This does not mean a confrontation of the country against the city. It is a matter of developing the nation's strength and quality to the fullest. This is the pattern for better living in America.

G.B. Gunlogson